

30 Sept 2005

Ag Appropriations Approved By US Senate

Both the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives have approved their own version of the fiscal 2006 agriculture appropriations bill. This legislation funds key programs in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) that assist the U.S. sheep industry.

Last week, Chairman Robert Bennett (R-UT) shepherded the bill through the U.S. Senate with funding for key projects that directly impact the sheep industry including: scrapie eradication, wool research, Wildlife Services (WS) operations, WS research, the National Sheep Industry Improvement Center (NSIIC) and the Foreign Agricultural Marketing Services Programs.

The Senate, as did the House, recommended that the scrapie eradication program receive \$19.3 million in fiscal year 2006, an increase from the \$17.6 million received in the current year. Wool research is being supported with a \$300,000 provision in the Senate.

NSIIC is slated to receive \$2 million in the Senate version to continue funding loans and grants for the advancement of the U.S. sheep industry. The House bill recommended \$500,000.

WS operations and research are supported in the Senate by funding levels of \$72.9 million and \$17.5 million, respectively with the House recommending \$79 million and \$14.4 million, respectively.

The Senate bill provides over \$28 million for the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative to enhance efforts to manage and prevent the spread of invasive species. This is nearly \$5 million more than the fiscal year 2005 level.

Authored by Rep. Henry Bonilla (R-TX), the house bill includes key language regarding a Livestock Risk Protection (LRP) program for lamb; a program the house believes would be beneficial to sheep producers. The Risk Management Agency (RMA) is being urged to implement an LRP-Lamb pilot project of sufficient size and length to properly test the viability of lamb price insurance for sheep producers of all size operations and geography.

Chairman Bennett added language to the Senate bill restricting the use of Trends in the U.S. Sheep Industry, a publication produced by the Economic Research Service, and directed the secretary of agriculture to enter into an agreement with the National Academy of Sciences to conduct a comprehensive report on the economic development and current status of the sheep industry in the United States.

The Senate and the House will conference to resolve the differences in their respective agriculture appropriations bills. The American Sheep Industry Association will be working with the House-Senate conference committee on issues of importance to sheep producers.

Staff contact: Peter Orwick, ext. 33